

Dear Honorable Co-chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, and Distinguished Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Elise McCamant, and I am a second year student at Wesleyan University. As a member of the climate action group Sunrise Movement Wesleyan, I find it imperative to write to you in support of HB 5285, An Act Concerning the Public School Curriculum. Along with many essential provisions about financial literacy and teaching African American, Puerto Rican, and other histories, it also requires Next Gen Science Standards-based climate education in all public schools.

As a college student, I am double majoring in Earth and Environmental Sciences and Science in Society. Both of these areas of study are focused on our relationship with the Earth, and my personal interest comes from a lens of sustainability. None of this in my life would have been possible had I not had a background of education about climate change in middle and high school. Learning about climate and environmentalism has allowed me to be a conscious consumer, to care for the outdoors, and to understand and care more deeply for the lives of those around me, as I see how climate change is already impacting people's lives every day. I do not think I could be a good citizen or a good neighbor had I not learned about the climate crisis.

As the climate crisis intensifies, it is becoming increasingly obvious that while we are all affected, the issue does not impact everyone equally. Climate change is a threat multiplier, and as such, it impacts marginalized and vulnerable groups disproportionately, including Black, Indigenous, Asian and other people of color. Thus, it is crucial that the public is educated on these facts.

As a college student, my generation is inheriting the climate crisis. Youth deserve to learn about our reality because only then will we be able to work towards a solution to this existential threat. Public support for climate crisis education is overwhelming - last year the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication found that 78% of registered voters already support this policy. With rising public support and a heightening climate crisis, this is the crucial moment to mandate climate education for our students by voting yes and supporting HB 5285.

Regards,
Elise McCamant